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Messianic Perspectives[®]

God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.

THE COMING MIDDLE EAST WARS

★ PART 1 ★

BY DR. GARY HEDRICK

This is the first installment in a two-part series dealing with the biblical prophecies of end-time wars centering in the Middle East.

In December of 2010, a vegetable vendor in Tunisia set himself on fire as a protest against the local police. They had seized his cart and wouldn't give it back. The man was badly burned in the incident and later died.



AFP/Getty Images

A poster featuring the slogan: The spark of the revolution—martyr Mohamed Bouazizi.

This desperate act of defiance by one individual changed the political complexion of the Middle East. It ignited a firestorm of rage and rebellion that swept throughout the region and eventually came to be known as “Arab Spring.”

At first, populist uprisings in Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen were hailed in the West as revolutions that could replace cruel dictatorships with promising democracies. But then some of us noticed that others were standing quietly in the wings, also applauding—among them, Al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood.

These Islamist groups know very well that so-called “democracy” can be a two-edged sword. If the people are truly in charge, then extremists only have to convince the majority to live under Islamist rule.

That is precisely what has happened in Egypt, one of the largest and most influential Arab countries in the world. The Muslim Brotherhood candidate was elected to the Egyptian presidency in June of this year.

Calling for a New Caliphate

So far, there have been indications that the new Egyptian president would like to honor the longstanding peace agreement with Israel. The problem he has, however, is that much of his constituency consists of extremists who despise Israel and want Jerusalem to be the capital of the Arab world.

A current of discontent continues to ripple throughout the Arab world and militant jihadists are trying to take

advantage of it. When dictators are toppled, the extremists know it's an opportunity to sweep in and fill the vacuum.

Feeling empowered in the wake of their perceived success in Egypt, militant Muslims are renewing their call for the formation of a new caliphate (that is, an Islamic state or empire governed according to Sharia law) to span the Arab world—and again, with Jerusalem as its capital. This is what extremist groups have been advocating for years. When Al Qaeda launched its Internet propaganda broadcast in 2005, for example, it was called “Voice of the Caliphate” (now known as “Caliphate Voice Channel”).

Their intentions, then, are clear. Arab Spring is setting the stage for a massive showdown pitting the emerging Islamist alliance against Israel and her dwindling list of reliable allies. If we are reading the prophecies correctly, this (among other factors) will lead to a series of end-time wars.

Any Mideast war that breaks out in the 21st century will be, for all practical purposes, a world war. In any future conflict involving Israel and her Arab neighbors, the rest of the world will quickly fall into alignment behind one side or the other.

When it happens, there will be few, if any, neutral parties.



AFP/Getty Images

Egyptian supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood take part in a demonstration outside the administration court in Cairo on July 17, 2012.



AFP/Getty Images

Activists of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, a hardline Muslim group advocating an Islamic caliphate on March 5, 2006.

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In the Rabbis' Tunnel is the traditional spot believed to be directly underneath the ancient Holy of Holies in the Temple. In rabbinic thought, this is the center of the world.

Israel in the Crosshairs

Sometimes people in other parts of the world ask, “Why should I care about what happens in the Middle East?” The answer is simple: what happens there invariably affects the rest of the world. It’s always been that way.

Recorded history, in fact, began with warfare in the Middle East—and, somewhat ironically, it will end in much the same way. The prophetic Scriptures outline a future series of military campaigns that will center in the Middle East. In each instance, the aggressors will have the same objective: to defeat, plunder, and destroy Israel.

This shouldn’t come as a surprise to anyone. The forces of darkness are intent on the destruction of God’s

earthly people because they’re the ones through whom the Messiah came into the world. The idea of Israel and Jerusalem being the center of the world isn’t just a rabbinic or biblical tradition. It’s also a geopolitical reality because anything significant that happens there affects the rest of the world.

After all, this is where three continents—Africa, Europe, and Asia—intersect. It’s where world commerce passed through ancient trade routes, and where civilizations and empires clashed. Someday, this ageless battleground will play host to a stormy vortex of earth-shaking conflicts as God’s enemies come against His earthly people Israel. Even now, particularly in the United Nations, we can see the international community “choosing sides.”

Times of the Gentiles

In one of His prophetic teachings, the Lord talked about “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24). We understand these “times” as an extended period during which the Jewish people would endure the domination of Gentile world powers (Rom. 11:25). Yeshua himself said it would be a time when the nations would “trample” Jerusalem underfoot (Luke 21:24).

During much of this period of Gentile ascendancy, beginning in ancient times when Israel lost control of her Land until this day, world powers have indeed trampled on the Land of Israel. Roman, Byzantine, Muslim, Catholic, and British powers have all exerted their military might to control the Holy City at various times in its history.

Even today, the Palestinians control the heart of Jerusalem—the Temple Mount. For all practical purposes, then, the prophesied Gentile dominion over Jerusalem continues.¹ Since 1948, however, we have been in a transition from “the times of the Gentiles” into a renewed time of God’s dealing directly with His ancient people, Israel.²

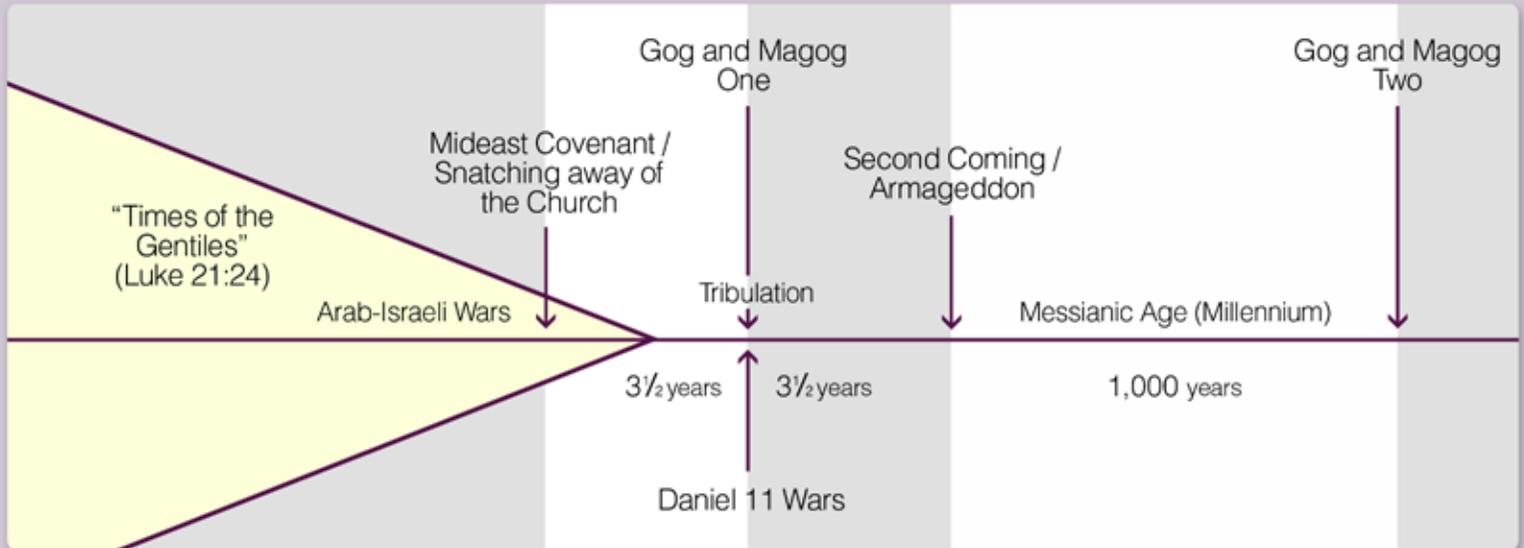
Earth’s Final Wars

As the current phase of Gentile-centric history draws to a close, the Bible indicates that the Middle East will serve as the staging ground for a series of devastating military conflicts. These campaigns escalate in size and scope until they culminate in the second Battle of Gog and Magog—the war, literally, to

end all wars. It takes place at the close of the Millennium.

We will consider these conflicts one at a time and in what I believe is their correct chronological order. In this first installment, we will discuss the first two and in the next issue we’ll cover the last three.

“The Times of the Gentiles” and the Eschaton



The Wars of the Eschaton

Battle/Conflict	Prophetic Text(s)	Participants/Location	Beginning	Ending/Outcome
Preliminary Arab-Israeli Wars	Psalm 83; Isa. 11—19; Obad. 15-21	Repeated conflicts between Israel and her Arab neighbors in the Middle East.	Unspecified, but this series of wars could prepare the way for the Mideast “covenant” of Daniel 9:27, marking the beginning of the Tribulation.	Once again, unspecified, but indications are that the Israelis are overwhelmingly victorious.
Antiochus-Style Wars of Daniel 11	Dan. 11:36-45; 7:8, 20, 24-25	Invaders approach from north and south to battle with “the king” (an Antiochus-like, end-time Antichrist) in Israel.	Probably happens sometime near the midpoint of the Tribulation once the Antichrist breaks the covenant and is firmly entrenched in Israel.	The prophecy telescopes ahead to the end of Armageddon, when the evil king will ultimately meet his end (11:45).*
Gog and Magog One	Ezek. 38 & 39	Invaders from the far north enter the Middle East and march toward Jerusalem.	Could overlap with the Wars of Daniel 11, with the emphasis here on the invasion from the north.	God destroys the invading armies, but the Antichrist might take the credit.
Armageddon Campaign	Rev. 16:12-16; 19:17-21	Huge international expeditionary force (“the kings of the earth, and of the whole world”) launches an assault on Jerusalem to the south from its staging area in Megiddo (northern Israel).	Also called “the battle of the great day of God, the Almighty” (16:14), this campaign begins with the movement of the Antichrist’s forces toward Jerusalem near the end of the Tribulation Period.	The Armageddon Campaign is brought to an abrupt end by the Second Coming of the Messiah (19:11-16).
Gog and Magog Two	Rev. 20:7-10	Undercurrent of millennial resistance and rebellion finally breaks the surface with rebels from around the world mounting a desperate, yet massive, assault on Messiah Yeshua in Jerusalem.	Takes place near the end of the thousand-year millennial reign of Messiah Yeshua.	Fire comes down from Heaven and destroys God’s enemies (20:9) and the devil is cast into the everlasting Lake of Fire where the Beast (Antichrist) and False Prophet already are (v. 10).

*The demise of this evil “king” in 11:45 has led some commentators to suggest that he is not the Antichrist. Instead, they say he is some other “godless Jewish ruler who virtually will substitute himself for God during the period of the Great Tribulation (vv. 36-37)” (*Criswell Study Bible* [Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1979], 999). However, it’s unlikely that there will be two false messiahs during the Tribulation, both setting themselves up in the rebuilt Temple as objects of worship or veneration. There is no good exegetical reason why this “king” cannot be the Beast (or Antichrist) described elsewhere and whose end is depicted in both Daniel 11:45 and Revelation 19:19-21.

1. THE END-TIME, ARAB-ISRAELI WARS: PSALM 83, ISAIAH 11-19, OBADIAH 1-21

The first series of conflicts is anticipated in numerous prophetic passages that talk about Israel's Mideast neighbors scheming and joining forces in an attempt to destroy her. Of course, many of these ancient prophecies were fulfilled in the past when nations like Babylon, Egypt, Edom, and Assyria were a threat to Israel. Others, however, simply do not fit any past historical context. Therefore, they must refer to future events.³

Israel and Her Neighbors

Since the 1967 Middle East War, when Israel was attacked on all sides by hostile Arab nations and won an overwhelming victory, Psalm 83 has attracted the attention of some evangelical commentators.⁴ Here's how the psalm begins:

Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, And do not be still, O God! For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; And those who hate You have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, And consulted together against Your sheltered ones. They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation, That the name of Israel may be remembered no more" (vv. 1-4).

The psalmist says that Israel's surrounding enemies (the peoples cited in vv. 6-12 were situated north, south, and east of ancient Israel) are determined to wipe her off the map. Israel never faced such a far-ranging enemy alliance in ancient times,⁵ but she surely does today! The nations mentioned all opposed Israel during various periods in her ancient history, but never all at the same time.

Most evangelical scholars do not see Psalm 83 as future-prophetic. However, there are some who do.⁶ J. Vernon McGee, for instance, writes:

"Assur" is Assyria. "The children of Lot" would be Moab and Ammon. The names in this portion of God's Word are His enemies. There is no place in history where they seem to fit in; and that makes it a very remarkable section, because it appears that these verses look to the future. Apparently these nations, which were in existence at one time, will appear again in the future.⁷

The nations listed in Psalm 83 are ones that shared a common border with Israel in biblical times—like Philistia, Edom, and Moab in the south and Assyria in the north.

Dr. McGee asserts that the nations cited in Psalm 83 "will appear again in the future." With all due respect, however, nothing in this prophecy demands a future resurrection of these same nations so they can form a coalition, after thousands of years, to seek Israel's demise. Rather, the psalmist is simply describing a future time when Israel's Mideast neighbors will collaborate against her like they did in biblical times—only on a much broader scale.⁸

Foreshocks of the Future

We may actually be experiencing the foreshocks of the eschatological Arab-Israeli wars in our day. Israel's neighboring antagonists are Muslim countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Turkey, Syria, and much of

the rest of the Arab world. There were three major Mideast wars in the 20th century (1948, 1967, and 1973).⁹

There have been skirmishes and conflicts in the 21st century—including the 2006 Lebanon War, in which Hezbollah claims to have handed the Israelis their first military defeat. More are undoubtedly on the way. As Iranian-sponsored Islamic expansionism spreads its tentacles throughout the region, observers are coming to the chilling realization that a day of reckoning is fast approaching.

Militant Islamist regimes don't even try to conceal their determination to wipe the Jewish State off the map—just as Psalm 83 says. The odds Israel faces are daunting. Population-wise, the tiny Jewish nation is outnumbered in the Middle East by a factor of 50 to one. As we get closer to the Tribulation Period, then, we can expect even more Arab-Israeli wars and skirmishes.



One can easily imagine a scenario in which Israel wins a conclusive military victory over her Arab enemies in a future war. Afterward, an influential political leader, perhaps a European Union representative of the Quartet,¹⁰ moves in to offer the Arabs and Palestinians an opportunity to save face (in the aftermath of a devastating military defeat), while promising the Israelis genuine peace and security. Under these conditions, a comprehensive peace agreement could be an attractive option for all parties.

This, however, is admittedly speculative—and speculation, by definition, is subject to error. That’s why it is best not to parse the prophecies too finely, particularly with respect to details where the Scriptures are abstruse.¹¹ But still, it’s intriguing to imagine the possibilities!

Who Wins the Arab-Israeli Wars?

Psalm 83 concludes with a fervent prayer for Israel’s victory, but it doesn’t reveal the outcome of these conflicts. For that information, we turn elsewhere. Several “Day of the LORD” sections of Scripture in Isaiah and Obadiah, for example, mention conflicts between end-time Israel and her neighbors—and the outcomes of those conflicts.

It’s important to get the context right when interpreting the Bible. This is especially true when fleshing out the meaning of Isaiah’s prophecies, several of which are strongly Messianic and contain elements that transcend the immediate historical context. Therefore, we will look at an entire section of Isaiah rather than just a few isolated verses.

Isaiah 11—19

Chapter 11—This is a magnificent prophecy describing the millennial world when Messiah Yeshua reigns as the Davidic King: *“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea”* (v. 9). It looks ahead to an eschatological re-gathering of scattered Israel “on that day” (vv. 10-16).

Chapter 12—The prophet anticipates a future time when the people of Israel will praise Yahweh and celebrate His glorious works among the nations.

Chapters 13 and 14a—Isaiah recites a series of oracles against Israel’s Middle Eastern neighbors who have conspired against them. The first is Babylon.

Chapter 14b—The prophet continues with an oracle against Assyria.

Chapters 15 and 16—This is an oracle against Moab.

Chapter 17—An oracle against the city of Damascus (the Kingdom of Aram) is followed by a warning that God’s judgment on His people will continue until they turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel (v. 7).

Chapter 18—This is the LORD’s message to one of Israel’s more distant neighbors—Cush (Ethiopia).

Chapters 19 and 20—An oracle against Egypt is followed by a prediction that the land of Egypt will come to know the LORD “in that day” (19:21).




This section of Isaiah is primarily about Israel's oppressors in ancient times and the fact that God was using them to judge His people Israel for her sins. What's interesting, though, is that these chapters are interspersed with clues (e.g., the Hebraic eschatological formula "in that day" and the obvious futurist, millennial import of passages like 11:9) that there are secondary applications to the events of the Eschaton.¹²

After all, history tends to be cyclical—that is, events and circumstances are often repeated over vast periods of time. The Holy One of Israel, speaking through Isaiah, wants the world to know that God's judgments against Israel's enemies in the Middle East don't come with an expiration date.

Nations who conspire to destroy Israel in the future will suffer the same fate as those who have done so in the past. In some cases, the end-time judgments will be even more catastrophic than the ones that befell Israel's enemies in ancient times.

Obadiah 1-21

In these verses, Obadiah prophesied specifically against Edom, another neighbor of ancient Israel. The Edomites inhabited the area south of Moab and the Dead Sea (in modern-day Jordan).¹³ Like the Isaiah prophecies above, most of Obadiah's prophecy was about events that took place in his day—specifically, ancient Edom's cruel aggression against Judah (the Southern Kingdom).

But again, the eschatological future is also in view here, beginning with the prophet's reference to "the Day of the LORD" (v. 15).¹⁴ Israel, the prophet assures us, will rule in the Negev desert and will take possession of the hill country of Esau (vv. 20-21), as well as the lands of the Philistines (v. 19) and the Canaanites (v. 20).

The point is clear: efforts by Israel's neighbors to wipe her off the map will meet their ignominious defeat. That has been the case in the past—and it will also be the case in the future.

2. THE ANTIOCHUS-STYLE WARS IN DANIEL 11

Yeshua the Messiah was the greatest teacher and communicator who ever lived. His favorite teaching tool was parables—earthly stories with heavenly meanings. A parable enables the teacher to parallel two thoughts so that what we know about one of them can help us understand the other.¹⁵



The Punishment of Antiochus by Gustave Doré.
Inset: The Sacrilege of Antiochus by P.J. De Louthembourg

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, for instance, He aligns God's compassion for lost sinners next to an earthly father's love for a wayward son (Luke 15:11-32). The latter helps us understand the former.

We find this same phenomenon in prophetic passages. God uses historical figures like Antiochus Epiphanes and Titus, for instance, to teach us about the coming Man of Sin (or Antichrist). He uses something we understand (from history) to teach us about something that's less understood (because it still lies in the future).

Daniel 11 is a key chapter. Here we have the foreshocks of the Armageddon Campaign (which we will deal with in part two).

A Telescoping Prophecy

Daniel's prophecies encompass a panorama of world history stretching from the prophet's time (fifth to sixth century BC) across 2,500 years of world history (with the rising and falling of a succession of empires) and into the future to "the end of the days" (Dan. 12:13).

In Chapter 11, Daniel writes in considerable detail about the kingdoms of Ahasuerus, Darius, and Alexander the Great, as well as describing the far-ranging wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids from the 300s to the 100s BC.

Daniel is so specific, in fact, that critics have alleged that someone else wrote his prophecies long after the events took place—and centuries after the historical Daniel had passed from the scene. His prophecies are therefore (according to these critics) not prophecies at all.¹⁶

The real problem is that the skeptics simply cannot believe that Daniel could have known about these events so far in advance—and in such resplendent detail.

What concerns us in this study, however, is that beginning in 11:36, Daniel telescopes even farther ahead into the future to "the time of the end" (Heb., *b'et qetz*; v. 40) or the "end of days" (*qetz ha-yameen*; cp. 12:13).¹⁷ Remember that the angel had promised (in 10:14) he would divulge important information to Daniel about what would happen to his people Israel in "the latter days" (*acharit ha-yamim*). That is what he is about to do.

When we come to Daniel 11:36, "the king" (*ha-melech*) is no longer an ancient Greek or Egyptian. He's now the end-time anti-Messiah or Antichrist—a future political leader who knows how to get things done and who punishes his enemies severely while rewarding his obedient subjects lavishly (vv. 36-39).¹⁸

Antiochus and Antichrist

As we noted earlier, Daniel uses Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Greek (Seleucid) king (215-164 BC), as a template to provide us with important information about the character and schemes of the end-time Antichrist. Antiochus attacked Jerusalem in 167 BC on his way home from an embarrassing defeat in Egypt. The king was infuriated and took his anger out on the people of Israel. He slaughtered tens of thousands of them, installed his own "high priest," and defiled the Temple by dedicating it to the worship of Zeus. The whole episode was an unmitigated disaster for Israel.

Similar to Antiochus, the future Antichrist will have designs on “the Glorious Land,” or Israel (v. 41). However, he will need an excuse to move into the Land and maintain a presence there. Maybe that excuse will be an invasion by forces (lit., “kings”) from both the north and south of Israel (v. 40).¹⁹

Under those circumstances, he could use the newly forged “covenant” with Israel (9:27) as a justification to move his military forces into the Middle

East. The text indicates that he will move quickly and with devastating force, sweeping across the landscape toward Israel and crushing all who oppose him (11:40).²⁰

Fast-forward to the close of the Armageddon Campaign in Daniel 11:45, when the Antichrist—who by that time has become entrenched in Israel with his “royal tent” pitched there—“shall come to his end, and no one will help him.”²¹

In the next installment, we will explore the other three future Middle Eastern wars: the first and second battles of Gog and Magog, and Armageddon. ✠



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ENDNOTES

¹ Some prophecy teachers have suggested that “the times of the Gentiles” ceased in 1967, when Israel took control of most of the Old City for the first time in more than 2,000 years. As we have said, however, this view overlooks the fact that the Israelis do not control the Temple Mount—the very heart of Jerusalem. General Moshe Dayan, leader of the victorious Israeli forces in 1967, placed the Temple Mount under Arab administrative control as a goodwill gesture. Today it’s under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. This is why we believe that “the times of the Gentiles” will continue until well into the Tribulation, when Jerusalem is trodden down by non-Jewish world forces one final time (2 Thess. 2:1-12). Paige Patterson remarks, “Jerusalem and the temple will be trodden underfoot by these Gentiles until Christ intervenes at His return to establish the earthly kingdom” (*The Criswell Study Bible* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979], 1227). J. Dwight Pentecost concurs: “The times of the Gentiles, then, began in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and will continue until the second advent of Jesus the Messiah to this earth. When He returns He will smite the nations and ‘rule them with an iron scepter’ and ‘dash them to pieces like pottery’ (Psalm 2:9)” (*Thy Kingdom Come* [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990], 249).

² It should be noted that the Jewish return to Palestine actually began long before 1948. In fact, there were five waves of immigration (*aliyot*) from 1882 to 1939. In that sense, one could say that the transition from the “times of the Gentiles” began in the 19th century and will be complete when Messiah returns.

³ Nothing in the Bible is either irrelevant or inaccurate. All biblical content is there for a reason—and when properly understood, it’s all true. Therefore, if God says something is going to happen, and it hasn’t yet taken place, we conclude that He is talking about events that lie yet in the future.

⁴ William MacDonald, for instance, in his *Believer’s Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), views Psalm 83 as a prophecy that was fulfilled, at least initially, by the 1967 Middle East War in which Israel regained sovereignty over the Old City of Jerusalem for the first time in more than 2,000 years (675-76). See also David Reagan’s discussion of Psalm 83 in Part 3 (“An In-Depth Look at Four Issues”) of his book *The Man of Lawlessness: The Antichrist in the Tribulation* (McKinney, TX: Lamb and Lion Ministries, 2012), 83.

⁵ Almost universally, commentators agree that the coalition of nations described in Psalm 83 has never existed in history. This has led many of them—even the millenarians—to conclude that the psalm cannot be talking about specific future events. Professor Marvin Tate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary makes the point this way: “Kraus himself thinks that the list of [Israel’s] enemies in Psalm 83 is freely composed, as a more or less standard portrayal of an ‘assault of nations’ against Israel. The fact that there are ten nations named supports the conclusion that we are dealing with a stereotypical list (cf. Dan. 7:7, 20, 24). Such a large coalition of nations in alliance against Israel is both unknown and improbable (Deissler, II, 156)” (Marvin E. Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 20: Psalms 51–100* [Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998], 345). However, the fact that something has never happened in the past doesn’t mean it cannot happen in the future. British theologian David C. Mitchell, for instance, believes that although the list of nations may indeed be archetypical, future end-time conflicts are nonetheless in view here: “[Other factors] suggest that this archetypal alliance depicts eschatological war” (*The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], 102). In any case, today’s threatening Arab-Palestinian alliance, abetted by the United Nations, in tandem with rabid, anti-Semitic Islamism (political Islam), makes a future-prophetic fulfillment of Psalm 83 more plausible in our generation than ever before.

⁶ The general consensus is that Psalm 83 is a generalized community lament against God’s enemies rather than a prophecy of future events. The ancient Church fathers agreed. They lived, of course, when no nation of Israel existed, so they felt compelled to remove national Israel from the equation altogether, spiritualizing passages like Psalm 83 and applying them to the Church (see *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament VIII*, Quentin F. Wesselschmidt, Editor [Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007], 149-150). Today, however, the prophetic view of Psalm 83 cannot be so easily dismissed. The restoration of Israel as a nation in our generation dovetails nicely with a literal-prophetic focus in Psalm 83 and similar passages alluding to end-time Arab-Israeli conflicts.

⁷ Dr. J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary, Vol. 2* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 806.

⁸ See “Russia and the King of the North” by Carl Armerding for an explanation of how, in many instances, the biblical prophets used ancient peoples as referents pointing to future nations occupying roughly the same geographical areas north, south, and east of Israel (*Bibliotheca Sacra* theological journal [January 1, 1963], 50-55).

⁹ Israel also invaded the Sinai Peninsula in 1956 and Lebanon in 1982. Enemies of the Jewish State provoked both actions.

¹⁰ The Middle East Quartet consists of the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and Russia. Our secretary of state, acting on behalf of the president, represents the United States on the Quartet.

¹¹ As always, my views are my own. Capable Bible teachers differ with me on some points, including the chronological order of the eschatological wars—and they may well be right. However, virtually all premillennialists share the common ground of acknowledging that history’s dramatic conclusion will include several world-scale conflicts centering in the Middle East.

¹² “Eschaton” (an Anglicized form of the Greek word for “last things”) is a term used to denote the end of history climaxing with the LORD’s return to earth in power and glory. Theologians apply it in various ways, depending on each one’s own prophetic viewpoint.

¹³ The ancient city of Petra was situated in the area of Edom, south of the Dead Sea. The ruins of this archaeological jewel were used as a backdrop for the blockbuster film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989) directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Harrison Ford. Our C/JF Israel tours often take the time to visit Petra.

¹⁴ According to the *HCSB Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2010), “Then the text [of Obadiah] focuses on the Day of the LORD (vv. 15-21) in which imminent judgment on the historical nation of Edom (vv. 15-16), followed by ultimate judgment on ‘Edom’ as representative of Israel’s end-time enemies (v. 16), would result in the deliverance of both Judah and Israel” (1510).

¹⁵ The Greek word translated “parable” literally means, “to throw alongside.”

¹⁶ The phenomenon of writing a “prophecy” after the event has already taken place is known by the Latin term *vaticinium ex eventu*. It’s a deliberate ruse found in some of the ancient Jewish pseudepigraphal books that is usually not difficult to detect (see Robert Gnuse in Chapter 12 of *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism* [Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2011], 235). The Book of Daniel does not fit this profile, however, because of the solid evidence (from history and linguistics) for its early date.

¹⁷ The wars Daniel mentions were in the future when he wrote this book (sometime after 605 BC). But in 11:36, he begins using the Seleucid wars (which happened in the first through the third centuries BC, several centuries after Daniel wrote these words) as a template to foretell ominous events in the Middle East that would happen even farther into the future. We believe there is a time gap of unspecified duration between 11:35 and 11:36, corresponding to the time gap between the 69th and 70th weeks in Chapter 9. The phrase “at that time” (12:1; Heb., *b’et ha-hee*) is the textual link between the remainder of Chapter 11 and the end-time events of Chapter 12 (see 12:13).

¹⁸ This end-time “king” (the Antichrist) is known as “the little horn” in 7:8, 20, 24-25 and as “the prince who is to come” in 9:26.

¹⁹ Even some commentators who reject the futurist interpretation beginning in 11:36 are compelled to acknowledge a possible allusion to future events and characters. Paul Lederach, for instance, writing in the *Daniel* volume of the *Menonite Believers Church Bible Commentary* [Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994], admits, “Although history is linear, events in one era may correspond in a cyclical fashion with events in other eras. Thus this description of the dreadful king in many ways typifies the actions of similar tyrants before and after, including the possibility of a dreadful future personality such as an ‘antichrist.’” Nonetheless, Lederach goes on to claim: “The text itself, given the setting, is not to be interpreted as intending to describe a future antichrist or ‘lawless one’ (2 Thess. 2:3)” 249.

²⁰ At the beginning of Daniel’s 70th week, the Antichrist will make a peace treaty (covenant) with Israel (Dan. 9:27). This new alliance will give the Jewish people a false sense of security, and they will think they can “dwell safely,” at long last, in the Land (Ezek. 38:8, 11). Israel’s enemies, however, will take advantage of their naïveté and a coalition from the far north (probably including Russia) will invade Israel at the mid-term of that seven-year treaty (that is, after three-and-a-half years).

²¹ Dwight Pentecost takes the position that the two kings in Daniel 11 (one from the south and the other from the north of Israel) will succeed in destroying Israel: “After these two powers destroy the land of Israel (Zech. 13:8), they will be destroyed by God by a judgment from heaven in the same way the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fire and brimstone (Ezek. 38:22)” (“The Kingdom in the Book of Revelation” in *Thy Kingdom Come* [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990], 309). However, we believe the connection between Zechariah 13 and the Daniel 11 and Ezekiel 38 and 39 wars is tenuous at best. Israel will survive the attack, even with the Antichrist battling other invading forces on her own territory.

Bible Questions AND Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at garyh@cjfm.org, or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

(You may even see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.)

QUESTION: *If the Rapture is a biblical teaching, why didn't Jesus ever mention it?*

ANSWER: How can you be so sure that He didn't? It's true, of course, that the Lord focused on His mission of providing salvation and redemption for the world. So, with the notable exception of the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 and parallel passages), He didn't devote a lot of His time to elucidating the finer points of prophecy.

However, the Apostle John records a fascinating encounter between Jesus and Martha (the sister of Lazarus) where the Lord makes a rather remarkable statement that is consistent with a future, prophetic "rapture" event. In John 11, where Lazarus (*Eliezer* in Hebrew) has just died, Jesus comforts Martha by reminding her that her brother will be resurrected someday (v. 23). She replies, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (v. 24).

Then Jesus elaborates by saying, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (vv. 25-26).

Notice that Jesus is responding to Martha's statement about her brother being raised "at the last day." The Apostle John was the only one who used this phrase (the last day), and it's always about someone being raised from the dead. It's not one, specific 24-hour day, but a future, prophetic "day" of resurrection and judgment. For believers, this occurs when the Lord returns for His bride (1 Cor. 15:20-25, 50-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). For unbelievers, it refers to the Great White Throne (GWT) Judgment at the end of the Millennium (John 12:48; Rev. 19:11-21; 20:11-15). In fact, technically, the GWT Judgment marks the conclusion of the great, universal battle that has raged between good and evil since Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden. Death, we are told, is the final enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). That happens at the GWT Judgment, where the Judge of the Universe hurls death and Hades into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14). Once it's over, there are no more enemies. The war, at long last, is over.

Now let's go back and look carefully at what the Lord says to Martha. He says, "He who believes in Me," so we know He's talking about the resurrection of believers, whose spirits have been with Him in Heaven. Their bodies will be raised when He returns to Planet Earth at the conclusion of this age. "Though he may die, he shall live," our Lord declares. That is, even if a believer dies before the Lord returns, he will nonetheless live again because he will be resurrected. But that's not all. The

Lord goes on to say that some believers will be alive when He returns, and they *will never die*. The Greek text says, literally, "And whoever is living [i.e., at the time of My return] and is believing in Me shall never die" (v. 26, my translation).

The teaching here is that there is an elite group of believers who, because they are alive when the Messiah returns, will never experience the sting of death. Their bodies will be transformed (glorified) on the spot when they are "caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus they will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

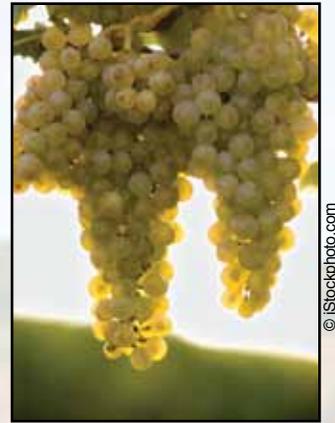
Here's a summary of the future sequence of prophetic events. Keep in mind that the timing of some events is imprecise. There could be overlap in certain instances, and some events may occur concurrently.

1. The Church (*Ekklesia*) Age winds down after nearly 2,000 years.
2. A seven-year period known as the "Tribulation" commences when the Anti-messiah makes a "covenant with many" (Dan. 9:27) in the Middle East.
3. At roughly the same time, a series of events known collectively as the Second Coming of the Messiah begins to unfold.
 - a. In the first phase of His return, the Lord Jesus comes back but doesn't touch down on Planet Earth.
 - b. The Bride of Messiah (or Church) is supernaturally caught up to be with Him "in the clouds" in an event known as the "Rapture" (lit., "Snatching");
 - c. The bodies of the believing dead are resurrected and glorified;
 - d. The spirits of deceased believers return with the Lord from Heaven and are reunited with their raised and glorified bodies, which have been "sleeping" in their graves on earth;
 - e. Following a 3.5-year period of relative peace, there's the first Gog and Magog invasion of Israel and the Holy Place of the rebuilt Temple is desecrated by the Anti-messiah ("Abomination of Desolation");
 - f. The second half of the Tribulation is "the Time of Jacob's Trouble," closing with the Armageddon Campaign in Israel.
 - g. The second phase of our Lord's return is His Coming in Glory.
4. The Kingdom Age (Millennium) begins and continues for 1,000 years.
5. The second Battle of Gog and Magog occurs at the close of the Millennium.
6. The Eternal State.



by Violette Berger

Fruit from the Harvest



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A New Birth

Michael Campo, CJFM area director (Chicago), presented the Gospel message by sharing God's love for His ancient people, the Israelites, at a recent church service in the Midwest. Michael said he used this as his primary topic because it has proven to be a wonderful bridge to God's love for the whole world—Jew and Gentile alike. Following his message, Michael gave the congregants an opportunity to respond to an invitation to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. Four people left their pews, walked to the front, and gave Michael the blessing to witness something that's never old—a new birth.

The Right Prescription for a Doctor

During a recent visit with his Jewish doctor, **Michael Campo** was asked, "Why do you do Passover Seders?" Since the doctor is Jewish, Michael began with a disclaimer because he knew the doctor would not like what Michael was about to share.

He said, "As a missionary with CJF Ministries, we are on a mission to help the Jewish people see that Yeshua was, is, and will forever be the Jewish Messiah." The doctor responded, "But the rabbis teach that if every Jew were to worship on the Sabbath at the very same time, Messiah would come." Michael answered, "We believe Messiah has come, and we base it on the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures." On his return visit, Michael plans to bring him two books: *Jesus Was a Jew* and *What the Rabbis Say About Messiah*. Please pray that his doctor would read them, and that it would be the right prescription for him.

Colts for Christ!

Richard Hill, CJFM representative and pastor of Beth Yeshua (Las Vegas), coaches his son Isaak's flag football team, the Colts. Although the Colts lost in the playoffs, placing third in their division, the team learned that playing football is not all about winning. It's also about honoring and glorifying God in their play. Everyone on the team agreed that it's okay for coach Rich to pray for the team before and after practices and games, followed by the team yelling out "Colts for Christ!" Rich shared the Gospel with the team at a practice, and one of the boys prayed to receive Jesus. Rich adds, "He proclaimed it to the rest of the team as we prayed. What a wonderful blessing!"

Seeds Planted

Jenya Drazman, CJFM representative (Toronto), and her friend Laura usually attend the annual "Walk with Israel," sponsored by the Toronto branch of Jews for Judaism, in order to distribute tracts and to witness. Soon after they arrived, however, an attempt was made to hinder their activities. One of the group's leaders was holding a video camera in one hand, pointing at them, and yelling: "Christian Jew Foundation missionary here!"

Jenya thanked him for the advertisement as she and Laura moved on. Several of the group's volunteers wearing the same "Jews for Judaism" T-shirts followed them and continued verbally assaulting them. At one point, two women even followed Jenya and Laura into the bathroom. Back on the street, a policeman stepped in and inquired whether they knew that they were being followed.

As they continued to walk, a Jewish woman from the group following them approached Jenya. She asked Jenya what motivated her to tell Jewish people about Jesus, how she came to know the Lord, and why she believes Jesus is the Messiah. Although interrupted numerous times, Jenya had a great conversation with "Martha," who wasn't well versed in the Jewish Scriptures at all. She was also able to give Martha her testimony.

Martha told Jenya that a stereotype was shattered for her that day. Jenya was not at all how she pictured Jewish believers, and she was surprised at how much Jenya cared for her Jewish clansmen. When Jenya asked Martha why she was volunteering with Jews for Judaism, she had no answer—only that she felt she was helping the community. Jenya encouraged her to search the Hebrew Scriptures and ask God to show her who the Messiah really is. Martha accepted a tract and expressed her appreciation that Jenya was standing up for what she believes. Praise the Lord!

Later, A Jewish man started yelling that they should be stoned. This same man eventually caught up with them to ask questions. "Mark" was soon engaged in a conversation with Jenya as she cited Daniel 9 and pointed out why Jesus is the prophesied Messiah. Mark was not that knowledgeable in the Tanakh (Older Testament) and asked interesting questions. Another hostile woman yelled that



Jenya and Laura were a disgrace to the Jewish community, but was later subdued after realizing that they were not as bad as she thought.

When Jenya and Laura were again harassed by the leader of the opposing group, a Jewish man confronted him, stating that they were free to believe what they wanted and free to share it with others.

The leader was upset that some Jewish people came to the women's defense. Others continued to yell at Jenya and Laura and pointed them out to a local rabbi. Jenya wondered how people recognized them so quickly, and was told that the volunteers had been given photos of Jenya and Laura that had been taken the previous year. Jenya thanks the Lord for their protection and for the opportunities to have such meaningful conversations, despite the opposition. Please pray for the seeds that were planted.

So tonight we stand with the people of Israel, for has any other people heard Your voice speaking out of the midst of the fire, as the children of Israel have, and lived?

To Israel with Love

John Kanter, CJFM Southwest representative (Texas), recently had the privilege of delivering the opening prayer at a fundraiser for one of Israel's largest hospitals, Assaf Harofeh Medical Center, near Tel Aviv. The purpose of the event was to raise money for the conversion of an underground parking structure into an emergency medical facility to treat the victims of terrorist attacks. The hospital is an academic teaching facility affiliated with the Tel Aviv University Sackler Faculty of Medicine.

The Academic Council of the Israel Medical Association has accredited all of the clinical wards for specialist training. Named after "Assaf the Physician," who wrote the oath for Jewish Physicians 1,500 years ago, the medical center is dedicated to the spirit of this renowned physician. In existence since 1918, it was once used as a military hospital

servicing a British army camp before the creation of the State of Israel. When Israel gained her independence, the hospital was converted into an Israeli medical facility. Since then, it has been rated one of the top medical and teaching facilities in Israel today.

The event's featured speaker was media personality Glenn Beck, and the event's organizers had originally invited a rabbi to deliver the opening prayer. The rabbi, however, declined because the designated time of the program conflicted with the Sabbath. The event coordinator happened to be a friend of both John and his wife, Terry. She contacted John and asked if he could stand-in for the rabbi, but advised him that it was an interfaith gathering and he would have to refrain from praying "in the name of Jesus." John agreed, and prayed this prayer:

Blessed be your name, Lord God forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to You. You change the times and the seasons; You raise up kings and remove them. You give wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those who have understanding. You reveal deep and hidden things; You know what is in the darkness, and light dwells with You. Lord, we live in dangerous times. Your enemies make an uproar; those who hate you have raised their heads. They carefully plot against your people, and make plans to harm the ones you cherish. They say, "Come let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more!"

So tonight we stand with the people of Israel, for has any other people heard Your voice speaking out of the midst of the fire, as the children of Israel have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation from the midst of another nation by trials, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great and awesome deeds, like all the things You, Lord God, did for Israel in Egypt before their very eyes?

So tonight Lord, in recognition of these truths, we humbly and respectfully ask that you bless our efforts to help finance the expansion of Assaf Harofeh. Expand our vision for what can be done through this vital work. Give us a spirit of generosity as we contribute to the resources of this great Israeli hospital.

Increase their effectiveness, help them stay true to their mission, and bestow upon their leadership much wisdom as they seek to provide quality medical care for those residing in a part of the world that is plagued by continual conflict.

In the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob we pray. Amen. 

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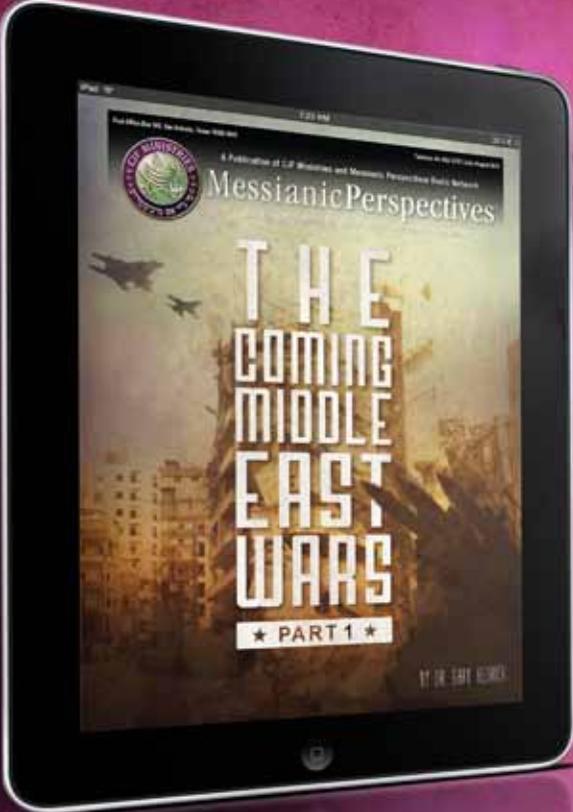
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